

# Passports

- [How do I obtain a Passport?](#)
- [How do I renew my Passport?](#)
- [Do I need a passport to travel to Mexico, Canada or the Caribbean?](#)
- [Passports in a hurry](#)
- [National Passport Information Center](#)
- [Need more information on Passports?](#)
- [Additional Resources](#)

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue or verify United States passports.

[Back to top](#)

## How do I obtain a Passport?

Passports are obtained through the [Passport Services Division](#) of the Department of State. Through your local passport acceptance agent, usually at the Post Office, you can apply for a new passport, renew your old one, replace a lost, stolen, or damaged passport, or add new pages to your existing book. If you are leaving on a trip, include your departure date on your application.

Passport processing times have changed due to large volumes of applications since the new Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative went into effect in January 2007. For the most current processing times, please visit the [Department of State website](#) .

You'll need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time; if your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession; if your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago or if your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under 16, or your currently valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.

[Back to top](#)

### How do I renew my Passport?

You can renew by mail if you meet these conditions:

- your most recent passport is available to submit and it is not damaged
- you received the passport within the past 15 years
- you were at least age 16 when it was issued
- you still have the same name or can legally document your name change.

For more information on forms and fees, go to the State Department's webpage on [How to apply for passport renewal](#)

.

#### NOTES:

- Residents abroad should renew their passports at the nearest U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate.
- Passports renewed by mail in the U.S. can only be forwarded to U.S. addresses.
- If you mutilate or alter your U.S. passport, you may invalidate it and risk possible prosecution under the law (Section 1543 of Title 22 of the U.S. Code).
- If your passport has been mutilated, altered or damaged , you cannot apply by mail. You must apply in person.

[Back to top](#)

### Do I need a passport to travel to Mexico, Canada or the Caribbean?

Beginning January 23, 2007, all persons, including U.S. citizens, traveling by air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda will now be [required to present a valid passport](#) , [Air NEXUS](#) card, or U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Document, or an Alien Registration Card, Form I-551.

Currently, according to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all U.S. citizens traveling by land or sea need to present either a passport, passport card, a [WHTI-compliant document](#), or a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license, along with proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate. By June 1, 2009, the proposed rules will require most U.S. citizens entering the United States at sea or land ports of entry to have a passport, passport card, or [WHTI-compliant document](#).

If you intend to travel internationally in late 2008 or 2009 and do not currently have a valid passport or other acceptable travel documents, you may choose to apply for these documents several months in advance to accommodate potential delays in processing. The Department of State website has more information about [applying for a U.S. passport](#).

[Back to top](#)

### Passports in a hurry

You're leaving for vacation next month and realize that your passport has expired. For a \$60.00 fee--plus the cost of 2-way overnight mail--you can "expedite" this process and receive your passport in about two weeks. Clearly mark Expedited on the envelope. Please note: Passport applications sent together or at the same time do not necessarily remain together. Passports will be mailed separately. For more information on expedited passport processing click [here](#).

The [San Francisco Passport Agency](#) serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required

San Francisco Passport Agency  
95 Hawthorne Street  
5th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays  
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

[Back to top](#)

### **National Passport Information Center**

For emergencies:

If you have a travel emergency, please call the National Passport Information Center to speak to a Customer Service Representative. Do not e-mail. Customer Service Representatives and Operators for TDD/TTY are available Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern Time, excluding federal holidays.

- Telephone Number: 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778)
- TDD/TTY: 1-888-874-7793

Telephone number for customers with telecommunication devices for the hearing impaired

For general questions:

You can get information on passports from a Customer Service operator at the NPIC numbers listed above. Additionally, automated information is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

By E-mail:

If you would like to email the National Passport Information Center for a general question regarding passports or if you have already applied for a U.S. passport and would like to know the status of your application by email, click [here](#) .

[Back to top](#)

### Need more information on Passports?

For answers to frequently asked questions, go to [International Visas and Travel Tips](#) on the State Department's website.

You've got your passport and you're ready to go on your trip, right? Not quite. You still have to check with the country or countries you'll be visiting to [determine whether or not you'll need a visa](#). A visa is permission from a country to cross their borders and comes in the form of a stamp in your U.S. Passport. You usually have to mail your passport to the Embassy or Consulate of the country you'll be visiting, so allow plenty of time to accomplish this. Also, check the State Department website for [travel warnings](#) and [consular information sheets](#) that provide very helpful information about the country you plan on visiting. Their services website also contains very comprehensive information on all the [services provided by the State Department](#) both stateside and abroad. This includes [crisis assistance](#) for U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad, and various travel publications available on-line.

American Embassies and Consulates General: Many U.S. Diplomatic Missions abroad have information on-line. For those that don't, check the State Department's [Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts](#) for addresses, and phone and fax numbers for U.S. Embassies and Consulates throughout the world.

[Back to top](#)

### Can you recommend additional travel resources?

For travel information by country, including entry/exit requirements, safety information, updates on current events, you may access [country-specific fact sheets](#) on the Department of State website. Prior to your departure, check the fact sheets for any advisories that may affect your travel plans or preparation.

It is also advisable to register at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the foreign country you are visiting in order to make your presence known, in case it is necessary for a consular officer to contact you in an emergency. Although voluntary, registration is particularly important for those who plan to stay in a country longer than one month, or who will travel to:

- A country that is experiencing civil unrest, has an unstable political climate, or is undergoing a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a hurricane.
- A country where there are no U.S. officials. In such cases, you should register at the U.S. embassy or consulate in an adjacent country, leave an itinerary with the Consular Section, ask about conditions in the country that you will visit and ask about the third country that may represent U.S. interests there.
- You may also [register in advance on-line](#) by visiting the Department of State website.

U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad also provide a wide variety of resources for U.S. citizen travelers:

- If you are ill or injured, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for a list of local medical facilities. At your request, consular officers are also available to help you contact family or friends.
- Should you find yourself in legal difficulty, contact a consular officer immediately. Although consular officers cannot serve as attorneys, they will visit you, advise you of your rights under local laws, provide a list of local attorneys who speak English, and ensure that you are held under humane conditions and are treated fairly under local law.
- Consular officers are also available to assist you in replacing stolen passports, contacting family, friends, or employers, address emergency needs that arise as a result of crime, and obtain information about local resources to assist victims of local crime.

Additional information for travelers is available on the [Department of State's website](#) . For additional questions or assistance, you may also contact my district office by phone at (408) 558-8085 or by fax at (408) 558-8086.

[Back to top](#)